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Effects of atomic radiation

Membership of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and the financial implications of increased membership

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 65/96, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the objective criteria and indicators to be equitably applied to determine membership that would best support the essential work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and to consider the financial implications of increased membership.

The General Assembly has changed the membership of the Scientific Committee only twice since 1955: in 1974 and in 1986. Enhancing the effectiveness of the Committee, scientific representation, contributions to the work of the Committee and equitable geographical distribution were factors highlighted in making those changes.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/96, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report to be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on the objective criteria and indicators to be equitably applied, taking into account all previous resolutions of the Assembly on the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, to determine membership that would best support the essential work of the Scientific Committee. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to consider the financial implications of increased membership, taking into account documents A/64/6 (Sect. 14) and A/64/6/Add.1.

II. Background

2. In its resolution 913 (X), the General Assembly established the Scientific Committee to undertake broad scientific assessments of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment.

3. The Scientific Committee plays an important role in improving international scientific understanding of the levels and trends of exposure to sources of ionizing radiation in medicine, research, agriculture, industry and nuclear power production, as well as in nuclear-weapon testing, and during and after accidents, as well as of exposure to natural sources of radiation. The Committee also fosters an international consensus in terms of the understanding of the health and environmental effects of radiation exposure.

4. This scientific consensus, promoted on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations, is fundamental to the international radiation safety regime, critically underpinning the international standards for protecting the public, workers and patients against the health risks of ionizing radiation. In turn, these standards are linked to important national and international programmes and legislative instruments. The Scientific Committee is held in high regard for its valuable contribution to wider knowledge and understanding in this highly specialized field, and for its scientific authority and independence of judgement.

5. The Scientific Committee currently comprises scientists from 21 States Members of the United Nations. For its annual sessions, more than 100 scientific advisers from the members of the Committee and observers from relevant international organizations scrutinize the scientific content of several comprehensive highly specialized documents. The professional secretariat of the Committee, provided under arrangements with the United Nations Environment Programme and located in Vienna, arranges the annual sessions and coordinates the development of these documents, which are based on scientific and technical information obtained from the wider membership of the United Nations, other international organizations and the scientific literature, according to the Scientific Committee's direction.

III. Evolution of the membership of the Scientific Committee

6. Table 1 summarizes the evolution of the membership of the Scientific Committee since the Committee's inception.

Table 1
States members and States desiring to become members of the Committee

Current regional groups[a]	*States designated by General Assembly in 1955*[b]	*States expressing desire to participate and ability to contribute in 1974;*[c] *States subsequently appointed as members by President of General Assembly (boldface)*[d]	*Invited to become member by General Assembly in 1986*[e]	*States indicating their desire to become members in 2007*[f]
African	**Egypt**	Central African Republic Zaire **Sudan**		
Asian	**India** **Japan**	**Indonesia** Philippines Thailand	**China**	Pakistan Republic of Korea
Eastern European	**Russian Federation**[g] **Slovakia**[h]	**Poland** Yugoslavia		Belarus Ukraine
Latin American and Caribbean	**Argentina** **Brazil** **Mexico**	**Peru** Trinidad and Tobago		
Western European and others	**Australia** **Belgium** **Canada** **France** **Sweden** **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** **United States of America**	Denmark **Germany** Israel Italy New Zealand Norway Turkey		Finland Spain

[a] For electoral purposes.
[b] In resolution 913 (X).
[c] Pursuant to para. 2 of resolution 3154 C (XXVIII).
[d] By letter dated 6 May 1974 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Secretary-General (A/9531).
[e] China was explicitly invited to become a member in para. 2 of resolution 41/62 B.
[f] Pursuant to para. 14 of resolution 61/109.
[g] Originally Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
[h] Originally Czechoslovakia.

7. The General Assembly, by resolution 913 (X), established the Scientific Committee, comprising 15 named States (see column 2 of table 1). Each Government was to designate one scientist, with alternates, to be its representative on the Committee.

8. The Assembly, in its resolution 3154 C (XXVIII), recalled its resolution 3063 (XXVIII), by which it had decided to consider means of enhancing the effectiveness of the Scientific Committee, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee to a maximum of 20, while reaffirming the need for members of the Committee to be represented by scientists. It decided that in the event that more than five Governments informed the President of the Assembly of their desire to become part of the Committee, the new members would be selected by the President of the

Assembly, in consultation with the Chairs of the regional groups, on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. Seventeen countries so informed the President of the Assembly, who, after consultations, appointed five States members of the Scientific Committee (see column 3 of table 1).

9. On 3 December 1986, the General Assembly, in its resolution 41/62 B, emphasized that the five permanent members of the Security Council were in a position to make particularly valuable contributions to the work of the Committee, and noted with satisfaction that China desired to become a member of the Committee. Accordingly, the Assembly decided to increase the membership of the Committee to a maximum of 21, and invited China to become a member.

10. Between 2002 and 2005, the General Assembly noted annually that some Member States had expressed particular interest in becoming members of the Scientific Committee, and expressed its intention to consider the issue further at each successive session. However, the issue was not formally addressed until 2006, when Member States that desired to join the Scientific Committee were invited to inform the President of the Assembly of their interest.[1]

11. Subsequently, in 2007, the General Assembly welcomed the fact that Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine had expressed their desire to become members of the Scientific Committee. However, the Assembly did not agree to change the membership of the Committee at that time and, instead, invited each of those six Member States to designate one scientist to attend, as observers, the fifty-sixth session of the Committee.[2] This practice was continued during the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Committee.[3]

12. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive report on the financial and administrative implications of increased membership, as well as on staffing of the professional secretariat of the Committee and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding.[2] Accordingly, the Secretary-General's report (A/63/478) highlighted the following areas: (a) the need to address critical financial and resource issues prior to reaching a decision on membership; (b) further strengthening of the current staffing of the secretariat with an additional professional post; and (c) providing a more realistic estimate of additional resources that would be needed if all six States were to become new members of the Scientific Committee. Subsequently, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in formulating the budget for 2010-2011, to consider all options to provide the resources identified in the Secretary-General's report.[4]

13. The Scientific Committee expressed its view that the maximum number of members should remain about the same to ensure scientific quality, effectiveness and efficiency, and made proposals that were alternatives to increasing the membership.[5] The Assembly directed the Committee to continue its reflection on how the current, as well as a potentially revised, membership could best support its work, including by developing detailed, objective and transparent indicators to be applied equitably to present and future members alike.[4] The Committee responded,

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[1] See resolution 61/109.

[2] See resolution 62/100.

[3] See resolutions 63/89, 64/85 and 65/96.

[4] See resolution 63/89.

[5] See A/63/478, annex.

expressing its concern about a potentially large increase, and proposed the engagement of experts from other States, as appropriate, in developing session documents, the invitation of experts as observers for specific agenda items, and bilateral arrangements under which some countries would send their experts as part of another country's delegation.[6] These mechanisms could be expanded to obtain useful contributions from the six candidate countries.

14. In 2010, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare the present report, addressing objective criteria and indicators to determine membership that would best support the essential work of the Scientific Committee, and the financial implications of increased membership.[7]

IV. Framework of objective criteria and indicators

15. The secretariat of the Scientific Committee has conducted a review of all previous resolutions of the General Assembly on the Committee. On the basis of that review and of relevant reports of the Committee, the secretariat prepared a table (see table 2) which reflects its understanding of the mandate and essential work of the Committee.

Table 2
Mandate and essential work of the Scientific Committee

Element	*Description*
Mandate	Increase knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources by undertaking broad scientific assessments of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment[a,b]
Essential work	(a) Recommend and direct the Committee's programme of work; identify and review important questions in the field of ionizing radiation; reflect latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation[b]
	(b) Consult with other bodies so as to avoid duplication of work and ensure effective coordination;[c] consult with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing scientific reports[c]
	(c) Request from Member States detailed information needed to assist it in its work;[b] recommend uniform standards for data requested[a]
	(d) Provide reliable scientific information important for the programme of work[d]
	(e) Conduct intersessional work: arrange for expert reviews; maintain surveillance on emerging issues; compile, evaluate, analyse, quality-assure and synthesize technical information on levels and effects of ionizing radiation[a,b]

[6] See A/65/46/Add.1.
[7] See resolution 65/96.

Element	*Description*
	(f) Interchange the results and experience of research conducted at the national level so as to improve knowledge of the hazards of radiation;[e] indicate future research needs[a]
	(g) Scrutinize draft scientific documents to ensure accuracy, usefulness, completeness and balance
	(h) Agree on objective scientific findings based on analysis, ensuring clarity and independence; report thereon to the General Assembly

[a] Based on resolution 913 (X).
[b] Based on resolution 65/96 and similar earlier resolutions.
[c] Based on resolution 1347 (XIII).
[d] Resolution 65/96 encourages this on the part of all Member States in general, and by implication it is expected of States members of the Scientific Committee.
[e] Based on resolution 1629 (XVI).

16. On the basis of the material reviewed and its own understanding, the secretariat has also developed for consideration by the Assembly a suggested framework (see table 3) of principles, criteria and indicators that could be equitably applied to determine membership that would best support the essential work of the Scientific Committee.

Table 3
Suggested framework of criteria and indicators for membership

Element	*Specification*
Principles for the Committee as a whole	(a) All members should be able and willing to contribute to the work of the Committee[a]
	(b) Extending membership should enhance the effectiveness of the Committee[b]
	(c) Scientific authority and independence of judgement should be maintained[c]
	(d) The need for equitable geographical distribution should be considered[a]
Essential criteria[j] for representatives, alternates and advisers	(e) Scientists with integrity, professionalism, the highest scientific competence, open-mindedness, independence from vested interests, and sound judgement[d]
	(f) Sustainable in-depth knowledge on a broad range of issues in the field of radiation levels and effects[e]
	(g) Capability to compile, prepare and evaluate scientific reports[e]
	(h) Competent assessment of draft scientific documents[e]
	(i) Capability to summarize and synthesize the material for the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public[e]

Element	*Specification*
Criteria[i] at the national level	(j) The availability at the national level of:
	(i) Investigative research and assessment activities relevant to the effects and risks of ionizing radiation for human beings and the environment[f]
	(ii) Organizations/methods for structured data collection and analysis for the evaluation of public, occupational and patient radiation exposure[c,g]
	(k) Capacity to provide authoritative review and sustainable comprehensive scientific advice on the broad spectrum of Committee activities covering, inter alia:
	(i) Relevant data collection and analysis, including quality assurance
	(ii) Assessment of radiation doses from natural and artificial sources[c]
	(iii) Assessment of effects and risks of radiation exposure for health and the environment[c]
	(iv) Assessment of biological mechanisms of radiation actions
	(l) Government commitment to and support of its representatives through a national framework that provides appropriate expertise, and comprises:
	(i) Sustained human and financial resources
	(ii) Delegation of authority commensurate with responsibilities
	(iii) Coordination mechanisms that adequately address knowledge management and quality assurance[i]
	(m) Active State participation in the global international networks on radiation science[c,h] and effective participation in Committee activities; secure ability and commitment at the State level to the future evolution of the Committee's work[c]
Objective and transparent indicators[j]	(n) Quantifiable information assisting in the measurement of scientific influence and impact relevant to Committee activities, e.g., number and size of relevant research teams, number of relevant educational programmes at the university level provided within the country, and number of detailed scientific publications in international peer-reviewed journals
	(o) Extent of national programmes for natural and artificial exposure assessment in place and being implemented for the following areas:
	(i) Medical exposure, including diagnostic radiology, radiotherapy and nuclear medicine

Element	*Specification*
	(ii) Public exposure, including environmental monitoring, discharge control and radioactive waste management
	(iii) Occupational exposures

[a] Based on resolutions 3154 C (XXVIII) and 62/100.
[b] Based on resolution 41/62 B.
[c] Based on resolution 65/96 and similar earlier resolutions.
[d] Adapted from resolution 3154 C (XXVIII) and supplemented.
[e] See A/63/46.
[f] Based on resolution 1629 (XVI).
[g] Resolution 65/96 encourages this on the part of all Member States in general, and by implication it is expected of States members of the Committee.
[h] Based on resolution 1347 (XIII).
[i] Presumed to mean standards by which membership that would best support the essential work of the Scientific Committee could be assessed.
[j] Presumed to mean information that indicates the extent to which criteria are met, thereby helping to inform decisions on membership.

V. Financial implications of increased membership

17. In response to resolution 63/89, the Secretary-General proposed the establishment of a P-4 post of Scientific Officer to assist the Scientific Committee in: (a) supporting increasingly extensive, complex and diverse assessments; (b) improving the dissemination of the Committee's findings and coordination with other international organizations; and (c) developing and maintaining support infrastructure for the longer term in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 under section 14, Environment (see A/64/6 (Sect. 14) and A/64/6/Add.1). This matter was to be addressed before any decision related to membership was taken. The Assembly, by its resolution 64/243, approved the establishment of an additional post of Scientific Officer at the P-4 level.

18. If the Assembly were to decide to increase the membership of the Scientific Committee, financial costs, as detailed in table 4, would be required for each additional State member. It should be noted that the secretariat could not quantify in monetary terms the associated benefits to be realized from the contributions made by any additional members.

Table 4
Component costs for each additional member

Item	*Estimated costs for the biennium for each additional member*
Travel of additional representative to annual sessions[a]	$5,300
Additional servicing costs (e.g., photocopying and printing)[b]	$1,300

Item	*Estimated costs for the biennium for each additional member*
Additional workload for the secretariat[c]	2 person-weeks (equivalent to $8,000)
Additional services required for extended time for discussion[d]	None for the first two additional members; beyond that, $50,100 in total for up to six additional members

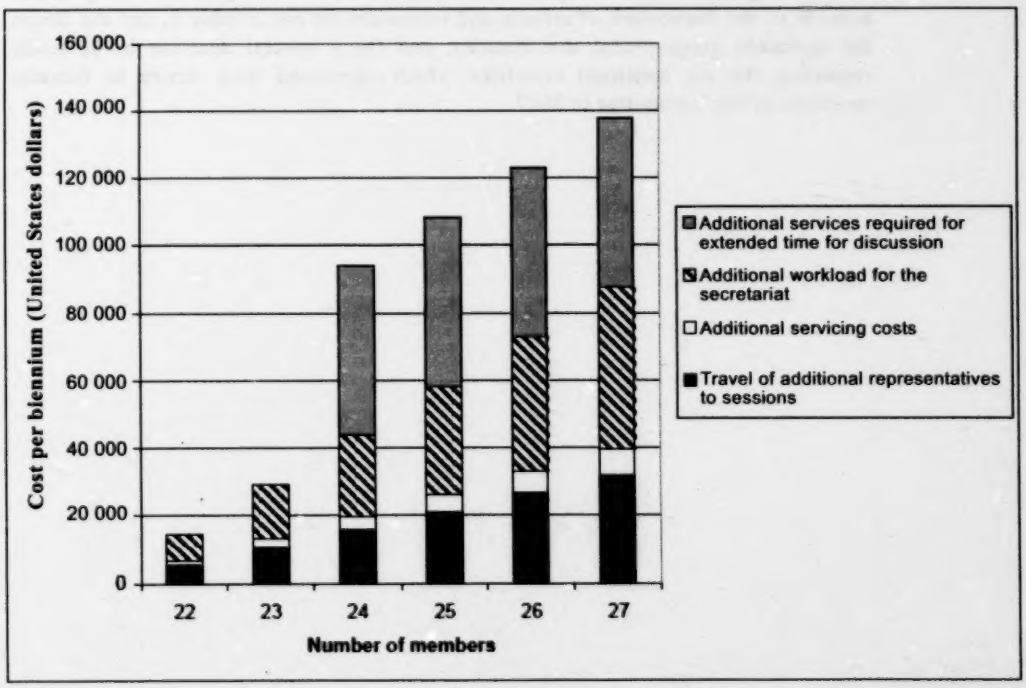
[a] No provisions have been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 for the Committee.

[b] The additional servicing costs for the annual session might be absorbed by the Conference Management Service as the United Nations moves towards more electronic documentation.

[c] It is estimated that, for each additional State member, an increase in the workload of the secretariat amounting to 2 person-weeks (calculated at the P-4 level) for the biennium would be required (A/63/478, para. 45). This time would necessarily have to be reallocated from other activities supporting the Scientific Committee, including those being carried out by the professional secretariat mentioned in para. 18 of the present report.

[d] The Scientific Committee has stated that a larger membership would reduce the time available for adequate scientific discussion to be addressed. In order to compensate for this, it is estimated that the time for discussion at the annual session could be extended by about 10 per cent without extending the session beyond five days and at no additional cost. This 10 per cent increase in available time might be interpreted as allowing the active participation of about two more States members at no additional cost. If the Assembly were to decide to increase the number of States members beyond that, then extending the length of the annual sessions to accommodate the additional time for discussion from five to six days could be interpreted as incurring additional costs for the Conference Management Service of $50,100 for the biennium. (Alternatively, the length of the session could be maintained at five days, but with reduced speaking time for delegates.)

Financial implications of increased membership



19. The figure above illustrates the dependence of the overall assessed costs on the number of members of the Scientific Committee.

VI. Commentary

20. The secretariat notes that the issues surrounding membership may be diverting attention from the need for the Scientific Committee and its secretariat to conduct their substantive work.

21. The secretariat notes that any changes made to the membership of the Scientific Committee ought to be primarily to enhance the effectiveness of its substantive work, while maintaining its scientific authority and independence of judgement, and respecting the desire for equitable geographical distribution.

22. The secretariat notes that 15 States members of the Committee were selected directly by the General Assembly in 1955 and that five additional States members were selected from among 17 applicants through a process adopted by the Assembly by its resolution 3154 C (XXVIII). In particular, the Assembly decided at that time to increase the size of the Committee to enhance its effectiveness, and then established a method and basis for deciding on the membership. That process was apparently more efficient and decisive than the open-ended process initiated by the Assembly by its resolution 61/109.

23. The secretariat suggests that the Assembly might consider the development of a two-phased approach. This might consist of: (a) a decision on the maximum size of the Committee for its effectiveness and efficiency (taking into account the views expressed by the Committee itself, and any additional resources needed), and determining the basis for any future changes in membership (which might take account of the framework of criteria and indicators set out in table 3, and the desire for equitable geographical distribution); and (b) a special decision to be made regarding the six applicant countries which expressed their desire to become members of the Committee in 2007.